Hospital Toronto, Master of Social Work Thesis, School of Social Work, University of Toronto, 1950, p. 97-100.

cxlvi. Porter states that while some 17th-century writers were generally not interested in "the physical but in the metaphysical nature of the madhouse," 18th-century writers were increasingly "dominated by one exceedingly tangible presence: notably, the madhouse, a totally secular institution" (269). Writers like Miss Adams and Miss Stein found some degree of "paradox" in the nature of asylum life, but rooted in the emotionally charged routines of an oppressively material building.

Just for the record, I cannot recall a single patient or inmate writer who was unequivocally positive about the Toronto Asylum. Occasionally a writer writes something good about it to a relative or a doctor, but this invariably seems to be motivated by a desire to appear "well" -- and to get out faster.

Mr. Jones was such a writer. He was admitted in 1910 with a morphine addiction. Others compared the Asylum to a hotel (a bad one), but he makes it resemble a spa or a modern fitness club, as he describes his improved physical condition and boasts that "I am forty inches around the chest, and have a fourteen-inch bicepts. I have taken a general course of physical culture ever since coming here, and am in the pink of condition." His assertions that "I have got ambition" and "I have that habit of mine beaten so far that you can't see it," his promise that "I am going to `made good'," and his off-hand dismissal of the place where is as "this old bug-house," are probably all part of that unconvincing "plausibility" that the doctors remarked. On the one hand he seems to elevate the place, and on the other to dismiss it entirely. Perhaps he cannot make up his mind, or perhaps he cannot really admit to his correspondent any more than to himself what it really is -- and that it is not so easily dismissed. His assertion that "I guess I could leave about any time now, but I want to go on a little further with my music," as if the Asylum were his conservatory, rings similary false -- a denial of the terms of his confinement there. Is it all a fiction? The hope that "I will some day be dropping in to hit you for a job" seems no more realistic. It resembles the "career ambitions" of Miss Adams, above.

In a letter to Dr. Clarke dated February 2, 1911 he seems to have lost his parole yet again and writes to have it back again "in the afternoon. I am in fairly good condition again and I would like to be able to go out on the ice for the remainder of the season." He claims to have altered his view of the Asylum:

> I believe that my little hysterical attack of a few weeks ago was about the best thing that ever happened to me -- taking "dope" and all -- for it made me absolutely disgusted with myself .... I have had more confidence in myself than I ever had before, in regard to conquering the "dope," and also, I have considerably moderated my point of view regarding this Asylum. Heretofore I have always thought -- "How long do the girls want me to stay?" Now the question is -- "How long ought I to stay?" -- and the answer with me now is -- "until I am well."

The letter develops his "fiction" that at the Asylum he will learn enough about music to undertake a new career, and indeed that he is only staying in the Asylum to learn more about music: "Also I have become ambitious to be a musician, and I do not think I could have any better opportunity than I have here." He reverts to his characteristic quotation marks to set off an especially plausible maxim, as he asserts that the sexual problems he earlier expressed are now under control: "I think I have settled that for all time -- `as a man thinks, so is he'." Again, he probably protests too much when he assures Clarke that "I am not trying to `taffy' you for my parole, but am trying to give you the results of my late `bust'." And again quotation marks surround his too plausible explanation, his too simple and easy solutions:

> my conclusion of the whole matter is simply "that if a fellow trys [sic] for all that is in him to do what is right, and keeps his thoughts entirely away from that which is injurious (women, dope, etc.) nature will give him back the mental and nervous poise he has lost."

In his letter to Dr. Stead of April 21, 1911 he attempts to ingratiate himself with the latter by letting him into what he terms "a deep dar-r-rk secret," that the lessons he has in mind are vocal. While ostensibly saying something "good" about the patients, he subtly distinguishes himself from them. "They" may be "nutty," but not enough to stand for his taking singing lessons in the ward. He does not say "we." He boasts that "Damon and Pythias will be a pair of `also-rans' alongside of the Professor and me" and that "I will stick to him like a leech." He eloped on June 2 1911 and was